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## EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ADULT BRACES

Written By Sophie Hines | 5 February 2016

We asked an orthodontist to give us the lowdown



Once seen as the epitome of nerdiness, the popularity of adult braces is now rocketing.

As Brits catch up with our US cousins and become increasingly self-conscious of our teeth, the demand to fix smiles that would once have been left crooked is growing.

'Eight years ago, my patients were 25 per cent adults and 75 per cent children – now it's the other way round' says Dr Anthony Lam, an orthodontic specialist at [Elleven Dental](#) in London.

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'Patients definitely have a greater understanding about the importance of aligning teeth, be it for aesthetics or even correcting a traumatic bite.'

Of course, many people have braces as teenagers, but that doesn't mean they'll never need them again. 'When people stop wearing their retainers, there is a 90 per cent chance of relapse' says Dr Lam. For this reason, those who've been through orthodontic treatment are now encouraged to wear their retainers every night on a permanent basis.

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The idea of a perfect Hollywood smile is certainly appealing, but many adults are worried about the cost of straightening their teeth and of course, the what they'll look like with braces.

However, as Dr Lam points out, there are now a wide range of braces available, some of which are extremely discreet. And, while they're not cheap, some orthodontists have payment plans allowing you to spread the cost of your treatment.

So what are your options? Here we break down the main types of braces available to adults...

### **FIXED BRACES**

#### **What are they?**

Basically the traditional 'train tracks' of your youth, these braces are fixed to the front of your teeth and are manoeuvred every few weeks by your orthodontist to move the teeth into place.

You can choose between a metal finish or a ceramic option, which is slightly more expensive but tooth-coloured, so more discreet.

Treatment time is flexible - it could be from as little as six months to several years.

#### **Pros**

- Can be used to fix severe disalignment.
- Normally cheaper than the other types of brace available.

#### **Cons**

- Many people don't like the thought of wearing a metal brace.
- Can cause some discomfort when they're first fixed into place.

#### **Starting price**

From £3,000.

### **INVISALIGN BRACES**

#### **What are they?**

Invisalign are clear, removable braces used to straighten teeth. When you first visit the orthodontist, they will take measurements to develop a custom-made set of aligners for you. These aligners are then changed every few weeks, gradually moving and straightening your teeth.

According to Dr Lam, the total treatment time with Invisalign is normally somewhere between six and 15 months.

#### **Pros**

- Invisalign braces are great if you're worried about the aesthetic impact of orthodontics.

### **Cons**

- They are not always suitable for more challenging orthodontic cases.

### **Starting price**

Depending where you go, Invisalign can cost from £2,500 to £4,500.

### **What are they?**

Lingual braces are fixed behind your teeth, so they're a good option if you're conscious of the appearance of braces.

First you'll have an impression of your teeth taken, which is then used to create customized brackets. Like traditional braces, once they are fixed into place lingual braces work by applying gentle, continuous pressure on the teeth to shift their position.

Treatment time varies from several months to several years, although the use of SureSmile technology, a futuristic way of producing custom-made wires, can speed the process up significantly.

### **Pros**

- A great choice if you don't want to look like you're wearing braces.

### **Cons**

- For the first few weeks these braces can give you a lisp as your tongue and palate adapt to them.
- They are more expensive than other types of braces.

### **Starting price**

Normally around £6,000, although this depends on your practice.

### **So, what's it actually like having adult braces?**

**Sophie Hines, Good Housekeeping's Deputy Digital Editor says...**

'I had fixed ceramic braces for 15 months, starting when I was 26. Compared to the metal train tracks I'd had as a teen, I was surprised how discreet they were, although I can't deny being self-conscious when I met new people. Over the period of the treatment, I became a master of the 'closed mouth smile', but now it feels great now to finally have teeth I'm not embarrassed of.

'One thing I under-estimated before getting braces was the amount of maintenance they would take. I spent a lot of money on hygienist trips and many evenings sat in front of a magnifying mirror trying to floss between all the wires, as cleaning your teeth is much harder when you have a brace. Oh, and you have to take a toothbrush to work, or you could end up with a cringey after-lunch situation!

'However, for people who have a real issue with their teeth, I really recommend investigating the option of braces. While I had them, the amount of friends and colleagues who quietly admitted they wanted them too was surprising – in my opinion, you should just go for it!'